

Pointy Hat Traveling Event System

An Introduction

Welcome! This is a guide to use the Traveling Event System. This system was designed not with the goal of achieving realism when roleplaying extended travel, but with the goal of making it exciting. It's meant to recreate the feel and appeal of other media centered on travel, focusing on dramatic scenarios rather than the real-life mechanics of travel. The Traveling Event System has also been made for those who find things like tracking specific distance depending on pace and other minutiae of other traveling systems in the game tedious. Its design concentrates on keeping those simple and to a minimum.

It is, therefore, not your best option if you're looking to recreate a realistic travel experience. This guide will not go over how rationing food works or how much ground the party covers when traveling, but rather will give you a way to account for that while prioritizing excitement at the table and a story-first travel design.

You are welcome to add more specifics like food rationing or distance covered, but this guide does not seek to do that, nor has the Travel Event System been designed with that in mind.

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Distance

The Travel Event System (TES for short) measures distance traveled by **Events**. The longer the distance, the more Events the party "bumps into".

Distances are measured in three brackets.

- **Close**
- **Far**
- **Very Far**

We are deliberately not including example distances in these. Close could be 6 miles (10 kilometers) or 18 miles (30 kilometers). It is for the Game Master to decide how much time to spend on each "leg" of the journey. Once you have roughly estimated the distances in your map, you will know exactly how many events the party will run into on their travels.

Events

Events are the main component of the Traveling Event System. An event is anything that happens while traveling, and the GM decides what events occur. How many events happen while on your journey to somewhere depends on the distance you are traveling.

- **Close:** 1 Event
- **Far:** 2 Events
- **Very Far:** 3 Events

Once a party has encountered the number of events determined by the distance traveled, they arrive at their destination.

TIP: It is important to note that you are welcome and encouraged to alter these numbers. As a matter of fact, the system itself encourages it.

If you feel like the distance they are traveling is long enough to merit 4 events because you want it to feel longer, you are more than welcome to tweak it to be so. Also, nothing is stopping you from adding another event to a short distance if the needs of the story dictate it. Plenty of events can happen on a short walk!

Rather than getting tangled up in specifics about distance, ask yourself what this journey will feel like. These numbers are just a guide.

Type of Events

Once you know the number of events, you are ready to choose the events themselves. Events are divided into three main categories, and are each assigned a color that you can place down on your map for quick reference.

Red - Combat Events:

These events are combat scenarios. Because you deliberately placed a combat event, these can be story-relevant combat encounters that happen while traveling, which systems that rely on random tables don't account for. Combat events can be an opportunity to showcase the monstrous flora and fauna of your world, or a great way to pick up the pace after a long section of roleplaying.

Examples:

- The party has finally caught the attention of the main antagonist, and they've come to meet them in the field themselves to ascertain how much of a threat the party would be by challenging them to a "friendly" duel.
- The party meets with their rivals after the party swindled them out of their money a couple of sessions back, and a fight breaks out.
- A spy for the main villain has located the party's whereabouts. If the party doesn't want this information to go directly to the person they are fighting against, the spy must be dispatched by any means necessary.
- The party has been noticing what look like intricate markings on the trees. Little do they know these are the tell-tale signs of a monster that marks their territory with these signs to warn trespassers, and the party did not listen to these warnings.

Blue - Roleplay Events:

These events are roleplay scenarios. They could range from a chance to meet a new helpful NPC to a tense negotiation with a hostile one. Roleplay events can be as high-stakes as combat events, and because they do not need to be balanced in the same way as combat needs to be, the stakes can be much higher for the party. Roleplay events are also the perfect way to showcase something that is often ignored when worldbuilding; just as worldbuilding involves coming up with geography, fauna, and flora, it also involves coming up with different cultures and their mores. A roleplay encounter could go south because of culture-specific etiquette rules that the party fails to follow.

Examples:

- The party meets a fellow traveling band of adventurers with a very similar goal to theirs. A rivalry naturally emerges between the two groups that will continue throughout the campaign.
- The party runs into a procession of knights defending a gilded carriage. A very powerful noble is traveling from one city to the next, and invites the party inside their carriage for tea and to make them an offer they simply cannot refuse.
- It appears that the party has walked right into an area where the ghosts of the deceased cannot move on. Some sort of evil magic traps all those who pass through this place, and if the party cannot figure out a way out, they'll suffer the same fate as the spirits cursed to remain anchored to this land forever. How will they convince the ghosts to help them?
- A traveling merchant seems to be making their way towards the party. As the party takes a look at the merchant's wares, they cannot shake the feeling something is off about them. All their prices are extremely low, but every time they ask for something, the merchant offhandedly mentions that it will cost "some gold and a favor".

Yellow - Exploration Events:

These events are an exploration scenario. There is no better event to show off the world than exploration events, as they shift the focus away from people and monsters and towards the land itself. They are an opportunity to make the fantastical locales your party travels to into tangible things that the party can interact with and must figure out a way to traverse and conquer.

Exploration events offer a great alternative to combat and roleplay encounters, as they shift the focus from characters that can solve problems with their might or their wiles and towards characters who rely on other skills like Survival, Stealth -- or even more obscure picks like Animal Handling and Vehicle Proficiencies -- to take the spotlight. It's also a fantastic way to introduce the concept of Skill Challenges into your games.

Example:

- A rickety bridge stands over a deep chasm stands between the party and their destination. It does not seem stable.
- Millenia ago, wizards parted the seas to enable people to cross between these two islands by foot, but this ancient magic seems to be wearing thinner and thinner with time, and random jets of water shoot from either of the two walls of water. What's worse, monsters have taken to using these jets of water to attack those who pass through the strait. How will the party cross this watery death trap?
- What seemed like a normal mountain stirs to reveal itself to be the back of a dragon turtle. The whole forest shakes and trembles as the gargantuan beast stirs. The party must make a run for it immediately, but how do they get off a moving mountain?
- While traveling through an old battlefield, crows with human hands descend upon the party and, in the blink of an eye, steal one of their most prized possessions. The party gives chase, but will they be fast and cunning enough to take back what's theirs?

Combo Events:

Sometimes, an event belongs in two or even three of the categories listed above. In the TES system this is classified as a Combo Event. Combo Events are events that mix several categories together, either because they could turn from one into the other, or because they exhibit traits of both at the same time. You can use these to add a wider diversity to your events when traveling.

Examples:

- **A Purple Event (Roleplay and Combat):** The party has come to bring justice to an evil hag who has taken many a life, but the hag offers them a deal before they can even start talking. If they let her go, she'll give them an item that would tremendously help in achieving one of the party member's personal goals. If they fight, she'll make sure the item does not fall into the party's hands. This event starts as a roleplay event, but could become a combat event depending on the party's choices.
- **A Green Event (Exploration and Roleplay):** While exploring an abandoned mine, the party meets with a small kobold who seems to have lost their way. The kobold is extremely wary of the party, but if they manage to befriend them, they could prove invaluable in controlling the mine carts that can take the party out of the mine. This event is both a roleplay and exploration event.
- **An Orange Event (Combat and Exploration):** The party must find the three objects that bind some nefarious spirits to an abandoned manor and destroy them, while the spirits routinely attack the party. This event blends exploring the manor while withstanding one or two rounds of combat as the spirits pop in and out of the realm of the living to attack the party and then dissipate.

- **A White Event (Combat, Roleplay, and Exploration):** The rival party has turned outright villainous, conducting their nefarious deeds from an old keep. They have kidnapped a beloved NPC and plan to use them in a ritual. The party can attempt to negotiate with them (**roleplay**), go directly on the offensive and dispatch them (**combat**), or infiltrate the keep and free their friend (**exploration**).